



BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

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SERIES : Studies in 1 Peter ~ "A Living Hope"

July 29, 2007. Study 7

"A RADICAL REACTION 1 : Blessing the Persecuter" 1Ptr 3: 8-13

THE STUDY SERIES

Peter sums up what God has done for us in Christ : "You have been born anew into a living hope." **1:3**
Recent Studies have been about our RESPONSE to God's grace:

Be holy in all you do **1:16** ... from Study 4 - "A New Lifestyle"

"You are a chosen people ... that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. **2:9** ... from Study 5 - "A New Community"

These two themes, living commendable lives, and, giving witness to God's grace, continue through Peter's letter. They featured in last week's Study and continue into today's where we discover Peter's 7th principle; that suffering unjustly calls for the radical reaction of blessing the persecutor!

INTRODUCTION TO STUDY 7

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. **1Ptr3:9**

This verse is the focus of our Study today. There is :

1. AN EMPHASIS ... REPEATED and CLARIFIED

Note that the underlined phrase in 3:9 (above) is the same as that which begins 2:21 (below).

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."
When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. **1Ptr2:21-23**

Peter means for us to refer to this earlier passage. It's immediate context is the case of a Christian slave who was suffering under an unfair and harsh owner. The idea that a slave would overtly seek revenge was unthinkable. A master could execute a slave for any act of defiance or rebellion. So Peter, in effect, says to them:

"Jesus knows exactly how you feel, for he too was unfairly abused, but he did not retaliate."

In this later passage, Peter applies the example of Jesus to all Christians - even those who were free and who could legally / morally retaliate in some way.

Peter encouraged the slave to simply accept unfair treatment. But that doesn't go far enough!
Now all Christians, irrespective of their status in society, are commanded not just to a PASSIVE bearing of injustice, but to an ACTIVE response of seeking their persecutor's good.

2. AND A CONTEXT

Let's catch the flow of the text; Peter has been addressing three "groups" of Christians - firstly, slaves (2:18ff), then Christian wives of non-believing husbands (3:1ff) and finally Christian husbands (3:7). Now he writes :

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. **1Ptr3:8**

"Finally" should be understood as meaning "in summary" - not as an example of the preacher's disease of saying "finally" well before the end ... in Peter's case, with 2 Chapters still to come!

It's important to note that this verse is to ALL Christians. Eg. Are we are tempted to view what Peter writes to wives (3:1-6) as giving husbands dictatorial control of their "spousal property?" Then the command to husbands to be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble acts as a considerable MODIFIER as it is intended.

Secondly, note that the command *to not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing* is not given in a vacuum this radical reaction is asked of a person who is already committed to being a part of a functioning Christian Community where such attributes are the NORM. Peter, is this asking for CONSISTENCY of behaviour both within and outside the Christian circle of fellowship.

A. THE CONTEXT ... 1Ptr3:8

Earlier (in 1Ptr2:1), Peter lists 5 attitudes that the Christian should cast off:

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

Now he lists 5 attitudes to adopt and express:

... all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble

1. THESE ATTRIBUTES REQUIRE :

- a. SELF DISCIPLINE - they don't come naturally
- b. EFFORT - they don't come easily,
- c. SEEKING the other's good, and a TENDER heart.

2. THESE ATTRIBUTES ARE :

- a. A REFLECTION of Jesus' commands.

My prayer is .. that (they) may be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Jn17:20-21

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." **Jn13:34-35**

- b. EVIDENCE of the Fruit of the Spirit.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. **Gal5:22-23 a**

B. THE EMPHASIS ... 1Ptr3:9

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

William Barclay's Commentary on 1 Peter doesn't directly address this command; he sees v9 as a continuum of the attributes in v8, and climax to them - simply labelling v9, "FORGIVENESS"

1. CHRISTIANITY 101

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors ... For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. **Mt6:11-15 See also Mt18:21-2, Lk6:37**

Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **Col3:13b**

2. JESUS 101

As we have seen, Peter directly links the command "to bless" with the example of Jesus. (2:21-23.) This is basic to the ethics of the New Testament. Eg.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, **Mt11:29**

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. **Jn13:15**

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus **Php2:5**

Peter insists that there is a dynamic to the Christian life, that can be directly traced to Jesus, allowing us to transcend the difficult circumstances of life rather than be CONSUMED by them. The cycle of evil & insult is broken - deliberately replaced by seeking the other's good.

SOME REFLECTIONS :

1. Our reaction to hurt and injustice:

Arises out of our identity in Christ : Live as free men, but don't use your freedom as a cover for evil; live as servants of God. **2:16**

Has A Missionary Purpose :

that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into ... light 2:9

by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men **2:15**

if any ... do not believe the word, they may be won over ... by ... behaviour **3:1**

2. The Social Structure of our world, and our circumstances, are vastly different from Peter's. We should take every legal and socially acceptable way to right an injustice, but should be ready to forgo those rights if our witness to Christ is compromised. Our witness and the good of others should always come before the exercise of our rights. Ask such questions as, "In what spirit am I acting, to what purpose and what affect?"